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AUTHOR	Yindra, Kathy; Brenner, Viktor
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ABSTRACT

This presentation examines Waukesha County Technical College (WCTC), Wisconsin, students' goals and how those goals relate to academic persistence. Students who registered for Spring 2003 classes via the Internet were funneled through a brief survey. Survey results indicate that 59% of students aimed to complete a program, 23% aimed to complete 1 or 2 courses, 8% aimed to complete several courses but not a program, and 10% were undecided. About 58% of respondents expected to complete their program within 2 years, while 26% of Associate's Degree students expected to take more than 2 years to complete their degrees. Also, 56% of respondents were program-enrolled and, of those, 89% intended to complete a program. Findings indicate 26% of respondents were preparing to get a job, 21% were taking courses for personal interest, and 9% had no definite purpose. About 6% of respondents were preparing to transfer to another college. These numbers indicate that students at WCTC might benefit from career exploration services. The paper also argues that failure to complete a program is not necessarily a failure of retention, as substantial numbers of students do not intend to complete a program. (NB)

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Retention for Learning Presentation

What student goals can teach us about retention at WCTC

Kathy Yindra and Viktor Brenner

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Waukesha County Technical College

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Retention Questions

1. What are students' goals at registration?
2. What is the relationship between student's goals and retention?

Web Registration Survey

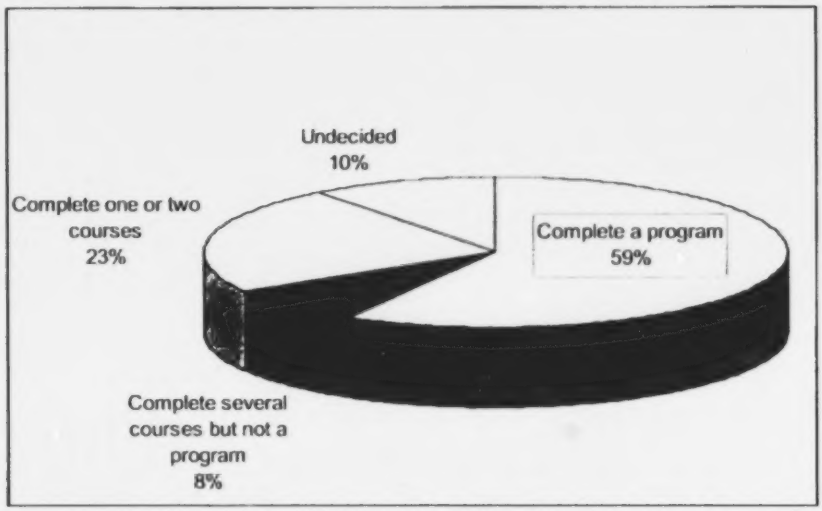
In WCTC's first effort to collect student goals, students that registered for classes using the web for the Spring of 2003 were funneled through a brief survey:

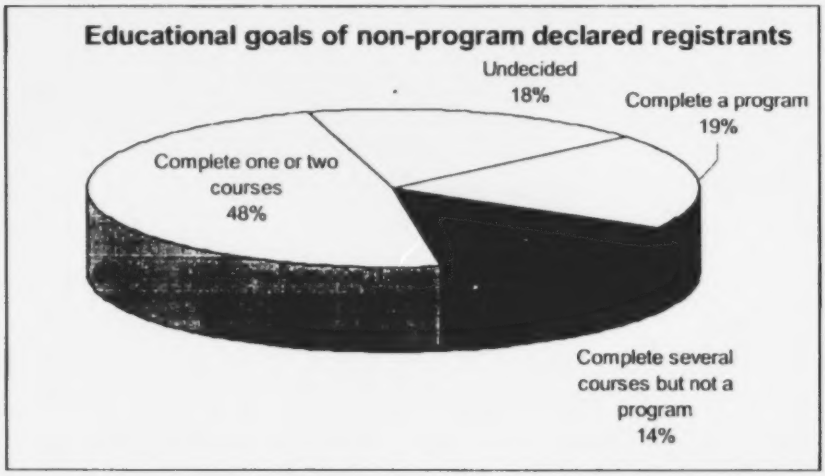
1. What is your educational goal at WCTC?
   - ❑ To complete an Associate Degree, Technical Diploma, Apprenticeship or Certificate (Go to question 2)
   - ❑ To complete several courses but not an entire program (Go to question 3)
   - ❑ To complete one or two courses (Go to question 3)
   - ❑ Undecided (Go to question 3)
2. From today, approximately when do you expect to complete your education at WCTC?
   - ❑ Within one year
   - ❑ Within two years
   - ❑ Within three years
   - ❑ Within 4 or more years
   - ❑ Not Certain

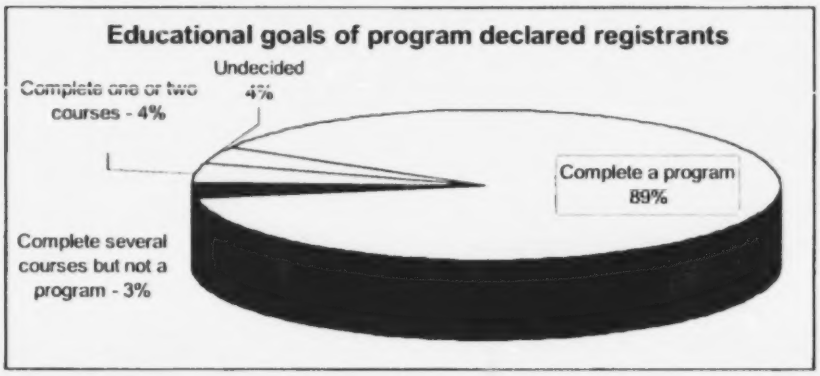
3 What is your primary reason for enrolling?

- ❑ Prepare to enter job market
- ❑ Prepare to change careers
- ❑ Improve skills for present job or field
- ❑ Prepare to transfer to another college/university
- ❑ Review or develop skills (math, reading, writing, language)
- ❑ Explore career possibilities
- ❑ Study topics of personal interest/self-improvement
- ❑ Satisfy someone's expectation (parent, spouse, employer, etc.)
- ❑ No definite purpose

What are students' educational goals?






Educational goals of program declared registrants
Undecided
4%
Complete one or two courses - 4%
Complete a program
89%
Complete several courses but not a program - 3%

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What are students' educational goals?

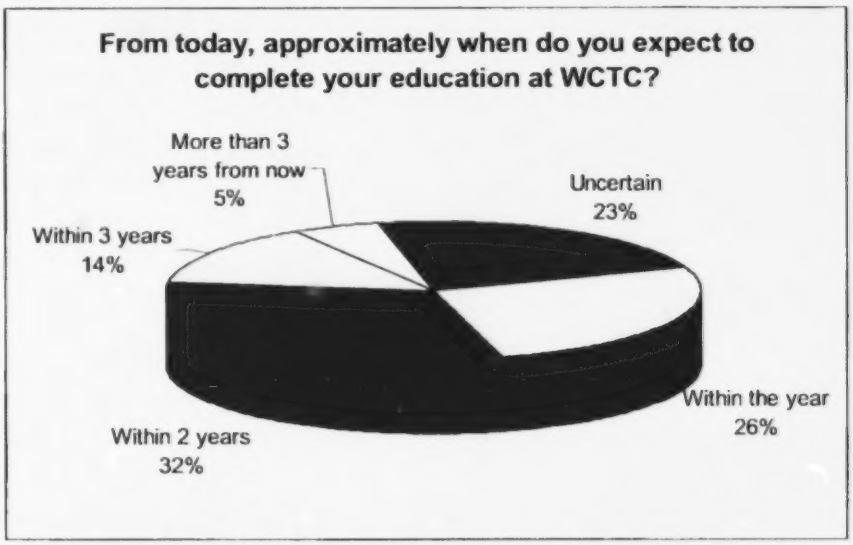
		AIDCODE	00	10	30*	31	32	50	ATC	Total
What is your educational goal?	Complete a program	Count	183	851	33	117	9	9	52	1254
		% within goal	14.6%	67.9%	2.6%	9.3%	.7%	.7%	4.1%	100.0%
		% within AIDCODE	19.4%	91.0%	82.5%	89.3%	81.8%	90.0%	67.5%	58.4%
	Several courses	Count	134	21	2	4			12	173
		% within goal	77.5%	12.1%	1.2%	2.3%			6.9%	100.0%
		% within AIDCODE	14.2%	2.2%	5.0%	3.1%			15.6%	8.1%
	One or two courses	Count	452	32	4	5	1	1	6	501
		% within goal	90.2%	6.4%	.8%	1.0%	.2%	.2%	1.2%	100.0%
		% within AIDCODE	47.9%	3.4%	10.0%	3.8%	9.1%	10.0%	7.8%	23.3%
	Undecided	Count	174	31	1	5	1		7	219
		% within goal	79.5%	14.2%	.5%	2.3%	.5%		3.2%	100.0%
		% within AIDCODE	18.5%	3.3%	2.5%	3.8%	9.1%		9.1%	10.2%
	Total	Count	943	935	40	131	11	10	77	2147
		% within goal	43.9%	43.5%	1.9%	6.1%	.5%	.5%	3.6%	100.0%

- 56% of web registrants were program-enrolled
- 89% of program-enrolled web registrants intended to complete a program (4% undecided)
- About two-thirds of ATC web registrants intended to complete a program (9% undecided)
- Almost half of the non-program registrants only intended to take one or two courses; nearly one-fifth were undecided as to their eventual goal

* EMT and CNA students are under-represented in this study, since many students in those programs are registered in class and do not go through web registration

When do students expect to complete their education?

- 58% of web registrants expect to complete their program within the next 2 years
- About one-fourth of Associate's Degree students expect to take more than 2 more years to complete their degrees


From today, approximately when do you expect to complete your education at WCTC?
More than 3 years from now 5%
Uncertain 23%
Within 3 years 14%
Within the year 26%
Within 2 years 32%

When do you expect to complete your education?	AIDCODE	00	10	30*	31	32	50	ATC	Total
Within the year	Count	74	226	19	54		3	32	408
	% within TIME	18.1%	55.4%	4.7%	13.2%		.7%	7.8%	100.0%
	% within AIDCODE	17.2%	25.9%	52.8%	45.0%		30.0%	51.6%	26.5%
Within 2 years	Count	67	336	7	40	7	7	15	479
	% within TIME	14.0%	70.1%	1.5%	8.4%	1.5%	1.5%	3.1%	100.0%
	% within AIDCODE	15.5%	38.5%	19.4%	33.3%	77.8%	70.0%	24.2%	31.1%
Within 3 years	Count	40	165	5	9			4	223
	% within TIME	17.9%	74.0%	2.2%	4.0%			1.8%	100.0%
	% within AIDCODE	9.3%	18.9%	13.9%	7.5%			6.5%	14.5%
More than 3 years	Count	20	52	3	2	1		1	79
	% within TIME	25.3%	65.8%	3.8%	2.5%	1.3%		1.3%	100.0%
	% within AIDCODE	4.6%	6.0%	8.3%	1.7%	11.1%		1.6%	5.1%
Uncertain	Count	230	94	2	15	1		10	352
	% within TIME	65.3%	26.7%	.6%	4.3%	.3%		2.8%	100.0%
	% within AIDCODE	53.4%	10.8%	5.6%	12.5%	11.1%		16.1%	22.8%
Total	Count	431	873	36	120	9	10	62	1541
	% within TIME	28.0%	56.7%	2.3%	7.8%	.6%	.6%	4.0%	100.0%

* EMT and CNA students are under-represented in this study, since many students in those programs are registered in class and do not go through web registration

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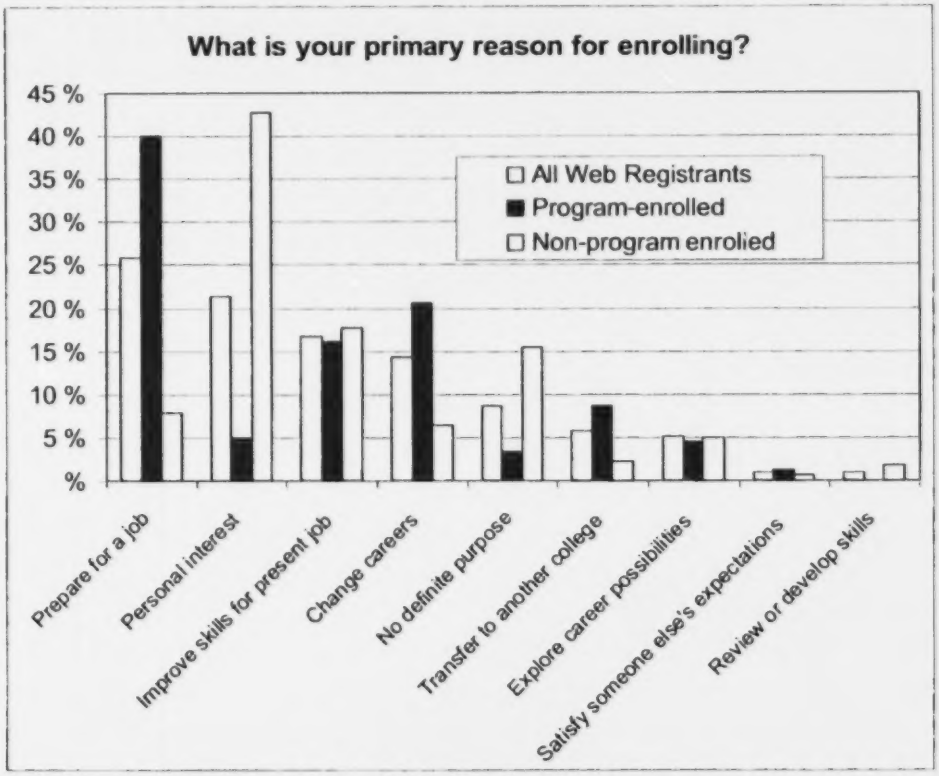
Why do students enroll at WCTC?



- 26% of all web registrants and 40% of program-enrolled were preparing to get a job
- 21% of all web registrants and 43% of non-program enrolled registrants were taking courses for personal interest‡
- More than half of short-term Technical Diploma web registrants* were seeking to change careers

‡ The proportion of students enrolling in non-credit courses is unknown

* EMT and CNA students are under-represented in this study, since many students in those programs do not go through web registration

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Why do students enroll at WCTC?

		AIDCODE	00	10	30*	31	32	50	ATC	Total
What is your primary reason for enrolling?	Prepare for a job	Count	74	383	10	70	7	7	4	555
		% within REASON	13.3%	69.0%	1.8%	12.6%	1.3%	1.3%	.7%	100.0%
		% within AIDCODE	7.8%	41.0%	25.0%	53.4%	63.6%	70.0%	5.2%	25.9%
	Change careers	Count	61	186	21	28	1		11	308
		% within REASON	19.8%	60.4%	6.8%	9.1%	.3%		3.6%	100.0%
		% within AIDCODE	6.5%	19.9%	52.5%	21.4%	9.1%		14.3%	14.3%
	Improve skills for present job	Count	167	128	3	9		2	51	360
		% within REASON	46.4%	35.6%	.8%	2.5%		.6%	14.2%	100.0%
		% within AIDCODE	17.7%	13.7%	7.5%	6.9%		20.0%	66.2%	16.8%
	Transfer to another college	Count	21	99		5				125
		% within REASON	16.8%	79.2%		4.0%				100.0%
		% within AIDCODE	2.2%	10.6%		3.8%				5.8%
	Review or develop skills	Count	16	3					1	20
		% within REASON	80.0%	15.0%					5.0%	100.0%
		% within AIDCODE	1.7%	.3%					1.3%	.9%
	Explore career possibilities	Count	47	50	3	6	1		4	111
		% within REASON	42.3%	45.0%	2.7%	5.4%	.9%		3.6%	100.0%
		% within AIDCODE	5.0%	5.3%	7.5%	4.6%	9.1%		5.2%	5.2%
	Personal interest	Count	404	41	2	5	1	1	5	459
		% within REASON	88.0%	8.9%	.4%	1.1%	.2%	.2%	1.1%	100.0%
		% within AIDCODE	42.8%	4.4%	5.0%	3.8%	9.1%	10.0%	6.5%	21.4%
	Satisfy someone else's expectations	Count	7	14			1			22
		% within REASON	31.8%	63.6%			4.5%			100.0%
		% within AIDCODE	.7%	1.5%			9.1%			1.0%
	No definite purpose	Count	146	31	1	8			1	187
		% within REASON	78.1%	16.6%	.5%	4.3%			.5%	100.0%
		% within AIDCODE	15.5%	3.3%	2.5%	6.1%			1.3%	8.7%
	Total	Count	943	935	40	131	11	10	77	2147
		% within REASON	43.9%	43.5%	1.9%	6.1%	.5%	.5%	3.6%	100.0%

- Almost two-thirds of ATC web registrants were seeking to improve skills for their present job
- Nine percent of all web registrants and 16% of non-program enrolled web registrants had "no definite purpose" for pursuing further education‡

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* EMT and CNA students are under-represented in this study, since many students in those programs are registered in class and do not go through web registration

‡ The proportion of these courses that were community education is unknown

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What are the implications of this data for retention?

- Failure to complete a program is not necessarily a failure of retention: depending on program type, 9-18% of program-enrolled web registrants did not intend to complete a program
- A sizeable number of students might benefit from career exploration services
  - 14% of web registrants were enrolling either to explore career possibilities (5%) or for no definite purpose (9%)
  - 10% of web registrants (and 19% of non-program enrolled) did not have a specific educational goal
- Students that are looking to change careers (in a hurry!) seem to select short-term Technical Diploma programs. Perhaps some of these students are influenced by economic considerations and may choose different programs if financial aid were available
- Although our programs are "two-year programs," many students will be unable to complete them in that time frame. At least one-fourth of Associate's degree web registrants expected to take an *additional* two years to complete their degrees[§]

[§] These data were from Spring registration, so very few students in the sample would have been in their first semester at WCTC

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